

Meeting Minutes

RED ROCK DESERT LEARNING CENTER CORE GROUP UNLV Center for Academic Enrichment & Outreach Tuesday, December 06, 2005

The meeting commenced at 10:35 a.m. with the following persons in attendance:

Loretta Asay, Kathy August, Christine Brehm, Paul Buck, Ann Edmunds, Dale Etheridge, Nancy Flagg, Jeanne Klockow, Richard Leifreid, Angie Lara, John McCarty, Alan O'Neill, Patrick Putnam, Jackson Ramsey, Michael Reiland, LaNelda Rolley, Mark Rehsynskyj, Frank Tepper, Liz Warren, Mary Weisenmiller, Pat Williams, and Billie Young.

1. Introductions and Announcements

The group welcomed Ann Edmunds -- University of Nevada Cooperative Extension. Liz Warren suggested the group revisit the issue of the project name due to the historical and cultural background associated with the Oliver Ranch name. Michael Reiland brought up the fact that another Desert Learning Center could be found on the Internet.

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the October 18, 2005, meeting were approved, with changes from Line and Space incorporated.

3. Update on Project Schedule

Michael Reiland provided an update on several key issues.

Utilities

BLM is still trying to make contact with appropriate people at Nevada Power Company to discuss net metering. Frank Tepper offered to provide a solar electric contact name. Loretta Asay will provide BLM with specific contact information on the person she knows. Nancy Flagg will follow up with David Frommer at UNLV on the person he was going to contact.

Water Line

Michael reported that the agency's recent meeting with the Las Vegas Valley Water District went well. There is still no final decision on the ground well versus water line options. Michael said the critical deadline for a decision is March 2006. A follow-up meeting with the Water District will be held in January.

Parking

Michael Reiland reported that Bonnie Springs is willing to work out a parking agreement, but other ongoing issues must be settled before this can occur.

Operator

Michael Reiland said the agency had planned to have the Request for Information (RFI) out by November 1, but this did not happen because the state BLM office could not agree on an appropriate contractual mechanism for operating the school. Juan Palma has asked the state office to allow the RFI to go forward without specifying the type of agreement. An option would be to allow potential bidders to suggest the type of agreement that would work best for them. If the RFI goes out, potential bidders will have 30 days to respond, after which the formal Request for Proposals (RFP) will be issued. At present, Michael does not see the delay in the RFI as affecting the overall project timeline.

Dale Etheridge asked if operators will be permitted to enter into subcontracts for specialized operations, such as the observatory. Michael said he hopes potential operators will specify those kinds of needs and intentions in their response to the Request for Proposals

4. Update on Design Development

Michael Reiland reported the Building Committee will meet December 13-14 to review final design development drawings. The second value analysis (VA) review is scheduled for the third week in January. Nancy Flagg asked about follow-up on Peg Rees' suggestion at the September meeting to have a general contractor on the VA team who can review constructability, so that the focus is on more than just the proposed materials and overall scope. Michael said he will follow-up with Pat Fleming.

Line and Space Architects will be done with its current contract upon completion of the value analysis and is currently negotiating the next phase of operations. A new contract for the construction documents phase will not be finalized until the water line and other issues are settled, according to Michael.

5. Cultural Treatment Plan

Michael Reiland reported that the initial plan has been approved by the State Historic Preservation Office, but the contractor has since made new findings on the site. As a result, they are now reevaluating a few sites. The good news is that the findings will be of great benefit to the curriculum, and they hope to eventually display some historical items in the school. Michael hopes to be able to share photos and a video at the January meeting.

6. Environmental Assessment Update

John McCarty of Otak, Inc., reported that Phase 2 of the environmental assessment (EA) is underway. He reminded the group that his firm is analyzing 13 critical elements: Air Quality, Threatened Species, Water, Flood Plains, Wetlands and Riparian, Noxious Weeds, Waste, Migratory Birds, Wild Horse and Burros, Surface Soils, Socio-economic Factors, and Light and Visual Resources.

The EA timeline is as follows: deliverables are scheduled to be available December 3, 2005, with a draft report by January 13, 2006. Comments will then be taken, with a revised draft ready by February 17, and a final submission to BLM by March 6, 2006. If the EA reveals the need for an environmental impact statement (EIS), that study would continue through March 2007.

7. Curriculum Update

Jeanne Klockow provided an update on the development of RRDLC core curriculum. As noted at the last meeting, the Historical curriculum is completed. The Cultural curriculum is now finished and was e-mailed to the core group for review and comment. Native American representatives determined that they would like to incorporate their traditions throughout the curriculum and not just in the Cultural strands. Jeanne has emailed them all of the completed strands for their review and input.

Jeanne reported that the Night Sky curriculum is 50% complete, and she provided the group with the draft list of essential questions for review and feedback. That work group will meet again on December 15 to finalize the Night Sky curriculum. Jeanne will begin forming the Green Building work group in December and hopes to have initial brainstorming and draft essential questions completed by the end of the month. She anticipates providing the core group with the Night Sky and Green Building curricula at the January 2006 meeting.

8. Standing Reports

A. BLM Capital Improvements

Michael Reiland reported that the Red Spring area is now open to the public. He said the Visitor Center project has just undergone its value analysis following the completion of schematic design. The Visitor Center Core Group meetings the second Tuesday of each month, and all are invited to attend.

B. Community Outreach

LaNelda Rolley reported that representatives from UNLV, BLM, and Aztec Communications met to review the communication plan. The group confirmed the key audiences and prioritized them into primary and secondary audiences. They also reviewed and tightened up the key messages and revised the outreach timeline. Speaking engagements and public open houses are planned during the first quarter of 2006. The university provided Michael Reiland and Kirsten Cannon with talking points to present to Field Office Manager Juan Palma about steps needed to implement the communication plan. Mr. Palma's concurrence and support is needed in order to proceed with outreach to environmental groups, Blue Diamond community, and other audiences.

Angie Lara read a transcript of public remarks made by Blue Diamond resident Evan Blythin to the Las Vegas chapter of the Sierra Club on November 7, 2005. The remarks are posted at the general store in Blue Diamond. Core group members ~~were encouraged to provide~~ a more positive view of the project to the public. ~~Liz Warren suggested a large public meeting at a neutral location.~~

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9. Committee Reports

Building Committee

As previously noted, the Building Committee will complete a final review of the Line and Space design development package two day-long meetings on December 13-14.

Wild Horse and Burro Committee

Billie Young reported that progress from a recent brainstorming session yielded positive feedback on the interpretive displays for the visitor center and wild horse and burro facility.

10. New Business

Alan O'Neill reported on his visit to Torino Ranch, which was recently acquired under a SNPLMA purchase. He described it as an opportunity to pilot the RRDLC curriculum, citing the advantages the facility offers in its ready usability, including capacity of overnight lodging for 170 students, swimming, and facilities in tune with the environment. Jeanne Klockow is working on a plan for potential use of the facility for environmental education, which is being discussed with the Torino Foundation.

Angie Lara reported that follow-up with the CCSD school board is proceeding. Loretta Asay has been helping the agency write a draft resolution for the board to endorse and support the Red Rock Desert Learning Center. They hope to present it for consideration by the end of January.

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m. The next meeting will be held Tuesday, January 17, 2006. Location to be announced at later date.